

SATIN FLYCATCHERS IN THE MOUNT LOFTY RANGES. The Satin Flycatcher *Myiagra cyanoleuca* is probably a regular breeding summer migrant in the South East of South Australia (Reid and Cox 1978) and either a passage migrant or vagrant across the rest of the State (Blakers *et al.* 1984; Reid and Cox 1978). Since Reid and Cox (1978) Satin Flycatchers have been recorded in the South East by Possingham (1983), McIntyre (1986) and Kernot (1988). Recent sightings elsewhere in the State have been made from various locations. These include one female at Billa Kalina Station in the North West (Langdon 1983), one at Sandy Creek Conservation Park (Watkins and Barrington 1983), one male near Kimba on Eyre Peninsula (White 1985), one female near Marree

(Eckert 1987) and three males on Kangaroo Island (Guy 1991; Baxter 1998). All these records fall between December and June which is during the migration period north to New Guinea (Blakers *et al.* 1984). It has been suggested that birds which are recorded at these distant locations are those migrating up through the continent rather than up the east coast of Australia (Reid and Cox 1978; Eckert 1987).

During March 1983 a female myiagrid was sighted at Eagle on the Hill (approximately 11 km SE of Adelaide) on a hillside dominated by South Australian blue gum *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* saplings. The bird was observed for a few minutes as it moved quietly through the saplings. Based on the description and photographs in Reader's Digest (1986), it was tentatively identified as a

Satin Flycatcher by the amount of rufous on the breast. This unfortunately wasn't enough to verify the sighting, as the plumage variations that occur in female Satin Flycatchers can easily lead to confusion with the female Leaden Flycatcher *Myiagra rubecula*. This has been pointed out by Reid and Cox (1978).

On 20 March 1993 an immature Satin Flycatcher was mist-netted at Eagle on the Hill about 100 m from the previous sighting 10 years earlier. It was encountered in a gully dominated by South Australian blue gum with an understorey of golden wattle *Acacia pycnantha* and smaller shrubs. The bird's identity was established after the following details were noted:

Head and back, uniform grey with some darker grey feathers in forehead. Tail grey with brown outer edging. Coverts, primaries and secondaries grey-brown with buff outer edging. Throat and upper chest orange-rufous. Lower chest and belly white. Upper mandible blackish-grey; lower mandible pale with greyish tip. Gape yellow. Measurements: total head length 37.2 mm, wing length 87 mm; weight 17.8 g.

The identity of this bird was confirmed by these measurements. In the hand the Satin Flycatcher is larger than the Leaden Flycatcher in both sexes

(Liddy 1977; Boles 1980). Published measurements of both flycatchers indicate that Satin Flycatchers are considerably larger than Leaden Flycatchers (Boles 1980; Rogers *et al.* 1990). They also show that this bird falls within the range of the Satin Flycatcher.

The bird was aged as an immature based on the presence of a pale base to the lower mandible and the yellow gape. The grey-brown of the primaries and secondaries and the extensive buff edging in the coverts are also a trait of young birds (Figure 1a-b). Adult feathers are uniform dark grey-brown in the wings with a narrow buff fringe to the leading edge of the primaries and secondaries (Rogers *et al.* 1990). The darker feathers in the forehead may have been the emerging gloss on the crown of the adult male but it is not known when adult plumage is acquired (Boles 1980; Rogers *et al.* 1990).

These two records illustrate the problems of positively identifying female and immature Satin or Leaden Flycatchers. Although recorded in the same area by the same observer, verification of the species was only made when the bird was examined at close quarters. As most observers don't get close enough to determine these species based on size, one would expect that most

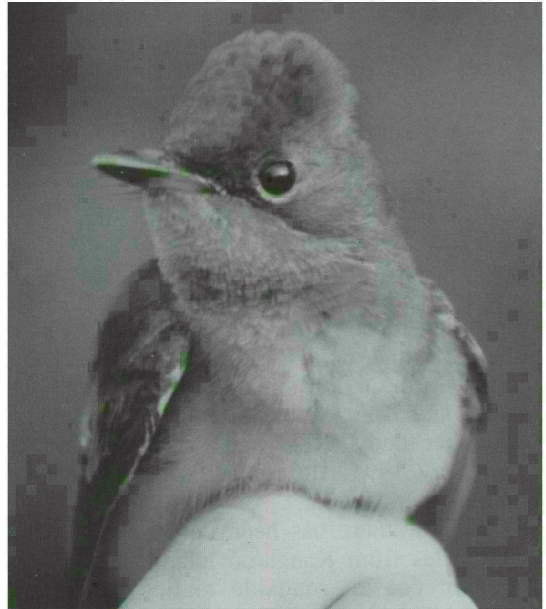


Figure 1a-b. Immature Satin Flycatcher at Eagle on the Hill. 1a (left) shows the pale gape and light edging in the coverts, while 1b provides a view of the pale mandible. (Photo. C. Rich)

future sightings will be difficult to confirm.

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